MONDAY
JANUARY 24, 1994
San Jose Mercury News

LOCAL & STATE

'We will not investigate Elvis sightings. We are not lunatics.'

— Total Research director Kal Korff

No mystery too deep for P.A. man

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Palo Alto computer nerd Kal Korff appeared on Larry King's television show in November to prove that Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed President John F. Kennedy. He's developed software that allows you to test your very own conspiracy theory and fire at the president's motorcade.

The JFK assassination is the least of the mysteries Korff says his organization, Total Research, plans to solve. Try UFOs, the Loch Ness monster and the truth about Exodus, Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah's Ark, Jesus Christ and the Shroud of Turin for starters.

There are limits, though. "We will not investigate Elvis sightings," Korff said. "We are not lunatics."

Clearly, though, Kal Korff is different from other tech heads who come home after work to play computer games or watch reruns of "Star Trek." Korff, a college dropout whose job is solving customer software problems at Apple's Claris Corp. software subsidiary in Santa Clara, says he has spent $100,000 of his own money in the past five or six years to finance his quests for "The Truth." And he has big plans — for books, videos and computer software documenting the results.

Total Research describes itself as a think tank composed of "a select group of scientists, technical experts, historians, philosophers and theologians who use their skills to help solve challenging problems, the results of which have positive benefits for humankind."

A gathering of Nobel Prize winners it isn't. Among its members are a director of videos for local rock groups, a self-trained historian who sells real estate in Sonora, a manager of rock groups, a

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LUCI S. WILLIAMS — MERCURY NEWS

Kal Korff aims to solve some of the world's great enigmas.

■ KORFF

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special effects expert and a graphic artist. About half are people Korff said he met through his UFO research.

"I'm out there to find the truth," Korff repeats over and over like a mantra, pointing to the evolution of his views of the JFK murder from conspiracy to the work of a lone nut.

But that's a tall order when investigating mysteries quite literally of biblical proportions: Does the Shroud of Turin show the image of Jesus? Exactly where and when did the Exodus take place? And did Noah really take that boat ride?

Korff, 31, says he seeks only the truth, wherever the truth may lead.

But the head of his group's archaeology and history division, Brad Sparks, who has written a 600-page manuscript on the Exodus, describes himself as "a conservative evangelical Christian" who believes in a literal interpretation of the Bible and is scientific assistant to the president of the fundamentalist Christian Research Institute in Orange County.

It might follow that he would have a particular slant when trying to prove or disprove parts of the Bible.

Korff doesn't think so. "The fact is this man has found stuff no one else has," said Korff.

Sparks said Korff has the same religious views as his, but "it's not a label he wants to advertise."

Korff said he is a Christian but rejects further labels.

Experts asked about Korff and company's biblical research said many of his facts were wrong and found some of his statements to be downright goofy.

Take his plan to ask the Vatican to allow him to test the Shroud of Turin.

"That's like saying, 'I'll have breakfast with the president. I'll call him at 10,' " said Brent Walters, an instructor of western religion at San Jose State University.

But Korff shrugs off the experts' criticism, saying they are biased. Almost all thinkers who are ahead of their time suffer ridicule or worse, Korff explains.

He forges ahead with his myriad schemes, hatching plans to help the homeless, advance animal rights and rebuild Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Korff's quest for truth started when he became interested in flying saucers at age 11. While still in high school, he lectured and wrote a book on the subject.

He remains obsessed with a Swiss UFO group centered around a one-armed farmer who claims beings from a far-off planet visit him and take him back in time and into the future.

In 1991, Korff let his brown hair grow, adopted a pseudonym and infiltrated the Billy Meier UFO group at its Swiss headquarters while toting a hidden video camera. He says a video of his exposé will be released soon.

Korff's greatest talent may be his ability to garner publicity. He talked his way onto Larry King's CNN show in November, at a time when a score of JFK assassination buffs who had written books were dying for the chance.

Korff says King told him during a commercial break that he wanted to bring him back for a one-hour, one-man special on the JFK assassination. He also was hoping King would write the introduction to his assassination book.

King's publicist asked the talk show host about those plans. "He's not aware of this at all," she said.